

# A poem for The Booker Prize

The beauty of the Booker Prize  
Is more than the sum total of its surprise.  
Sometimes for a great award  
To exist in itself is enough.  
To be there in the landscape  
To re-shape the discourse around freedom  
To open up the terrain of imagination  
To represent in the culture  
The democracy of participation,  
The elevation of language  
Above the debasements of truth;  
To restore the premise  
That a mind alone is sufficient  
For a world to be valid;  
To start an intelligent fire  
Among the ice-cold certainties  
To be brave in voice  
And to be vast in dreams  
To be fearless and to give form  
To the world's buried screams;  
To stare at horrors  
And give them narrative spaces  
To expand the possible  
And widen our realities  
To charm away troubles  
To speak for people  
In their broken places  
To celebrate our hidden magic  
To reveal the bones of the tragic  
To give every corner of the world  
A fair imaginative hearing  
And to respond to the tumultuous  
Dreams and songs of the earth,  
In these times, and those gone by,  
And those yet to come;  
To sing of beggars and kings,  
Of colonies lost  
And colonies of the mind unwon;  
To rage against the limitations  
Of stories, and to lift stories  
To a spirit realm;  
To magnify us, in tower block,  
In homelessness,

Or in corporate skyscraper;  
To remind us that imagination  
And heart, tears and grief,  
Laughter and death  
Make us all one,  
Under a divided inheritance,  
Beneath the sun;  
To redress wrongs  
And not to care about redress;  
To be what we are at our best,  
When the gods of wine and poetry dance;  
To give some enigma  
For future generations to chew,  
Some ever unfolding illumination  
Whose value now we don't know  
But may become weapons to hew  
Down evil, or just to show  
Some unknown, some bright  
Aspects of ourselves;  
To tell a great story  
Slant, or to raise  
An ant's tale into a giant's mind;  
To leap across boundaries  
And help us be leapers too;  
To awaken dormant powers  
With the summoning force of the word;  
To take us where we have never been  
To create a universal  
Community within  
The infinite space  
Of our collective reading souls -  
These are just some of the little things  
About which this blessed prize sings

Ben Okri  
October 2019

This poem was written by Ben to celebrate the Booker Prize and to mark the generosity of its years funded by the Man Group and the exciting transition to a new partnership with Crankstart.